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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
31 March 1965

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Threat of Foreign Volunteers
to Aid the Viet Cong

1. Recent Chinese and North Vietnamese statements are intended to raise the political temperature in the Indochinese situation, but do not necessarily commit either Peiping or Hanoi to any particular action.

2. On 22 March the Chairman of the Viet Cong's political arm, the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam (NFLSV), stated that the Front is "ready to continue to receive all assistance including weapons and war materiel from the socialist countries and all peace-loving peoples throughout the world." He further declared that "if the US imperialists continue to send their troops and the troops of their satellites into South Vietnam and to expand the war to the north and to Laos, the NFLSV will call on the world peoples to send troops and youths to come and side with the South Vietnamese people." The statement also threatened that the Front "will call on the South Vietnamese," who were regrouped north, "to return to take up weapons to exterminate the enemy and save their country."

3. Peiping's affirmative response to the Front call was summed up in a 28 March message from Communist China's Foreign Minister Chen I to

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his DRV counterpart. Chen I declared that "we firmly support the 22 March statement of the NFLSV. The Chinese people will exert every effort to send the heroic South Vietnamese people the necessary material aid, including arms and all other war material, and stand ready to dispatch their men to fight shoulder to shoulder with the South Vietnamese people whenever the latter so require." Chen I's warning was restated in a People's Daily editorial on 29 March which asserted that following the US "occupation" of South Vietnam and "aggression" against North Vietnam, "its next step will be aggression against China." It is, therefore, the editorial added, "the sacred internationalist duty of the Chinese people" to aid the Vietnamese people.

4. Hanoi has given full coverage to the Front statement. It has publicized the "eagerness" of bloc youths to volunteer for service in Vietnam, and the readiness of regrouped southerners to return south. On 27 March, the Fatherland Front, a regime propaganda organization, issued a statement affirming that "the struggle of the people in the two zones (North and South Vietnam) against US imperialism is being more closely coordinated than ever before. The Presidium and Secretariat of the Vietnam Fatherland Front Central Committee fully approve and warmly support the stand of the NFLSV in calling back, if need be, the sons and daughters of South Vietnam who have regrouped to the north." Hanoi has, so far, however, avoided any public commitment to send native northerners to South Vietnam, stressing instead that their duty is to defend the North.

5. The Front call for volunteers was carefully phrased as a contingency move, to take place should future US action further escalate the war either in South Vietnam, North Vietnam, or Laos. The issuance of the call at this time, together with the rapid and apparently coordinated responses by Hanoi and Peiping, suggests that the Communists hope to deter the introduction of further US combat troops into South Vietnam

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6. We believe the National Liberation Front, Hanoi, and the Chinese Communists are trying to boost the morale of Communist forces in South Vietnam, and, more importantly, are trying to raise the spectre of general war on the Indochinese mainland in order to increase the diplomatic and political pressure on the US and to deter the US from continuing, and perhaps increasing, its present policy line.

7. We do not believe that these statements portend any overt infusion of North Vietnamese or, especially, Chinese manpower into the war in South Vietnam, though there may be some increase in covert North Vietnamese support to the Viet Cong. As the Communists must certainly realize--indeed, Peiping is almost certainly counting heavily on just this--current Chinese and Vietnamese statements raise recollections of Korea in the fall of 1950. Actually, the Korean situation of a decade and a half ago and the present situation in Vietnam differ in many material regards. In Korea, US forces had either actually reached or were rapidly advancing toward the very borders of China itself and all indigenous (i.e., North Korean) opposition to such US advances had been virtually eliminated. No comparable situation exists in Vietnam, north or south, at the present time. Peiping and Hanoi almost certainly intend to play heavily on US and free world fears of another Korea, but we believe the chances of the Communists' responding in Vietnam within the near future as they responded in Korea in 1950 are considerably less than even.

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